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Stoker, W.

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Introduction: Enlightenment in discussion  
Wessel Stoker

Light and enlightenment are symbolic of life and salvation. This is true of both Hebrew and Greek thinking. These two streams of thought merge in the Jewish Hellenistic philosopher Philo. In Neoplatonism, enlightenment and knowledge are closely linked, and the term enlightenment refers to a mystical ecstatic contemplation of light. A religious understanding of the symbol of enlightenment is also found in the concept of 'Sophia' in the thinking of Russian Orthodox philosophers such as Solovyov and Florensky.

In the West, in the modern period, the term 'enlightenment' is primarily understood as a secular one, generally referring to a period in history, roughly speaking the eighteenth century. The emergence of the natural sciences gave rise, in (Western) Europe, to a feeling of optimism about a better life for mankind, and thus a belief in progress. In this way, 'Enlightenment' became the name for the cultural philosophical, religious and political programme of enlightened philosophers. This programme comprises independent thought, criticism, tolerance and progress, as well as the political translation of these ideals into a new rule of law, free of censorship by church or sovereign, in which the individual is free to express his or her opinion.

In 2004, the European Society for the Philosophy of Religion devoted its periodic conference to the Enlightenment and religion, 'enlightenment' being understood in its modern meaning: the Enlightenment as a historical period and a programme. How is the project of the Enlightenment continued? What alternatives are there in the modern day to the thinking of the Enlightenment? Are there also post-Enlightenment examples of thinking determined by the philosophy of religion? The present volume comprises the papers presented at the conference about enlightenment and religion; these contributions have been reworked in the light of the lively discussions at the conference, and subsequent comments from the editors. Although many more themes could have been included, the editors were of the opinion that

the lack of an article on Habermas was a serious omission, so that want has now been supplied.

By way of an introduction, there follows a short discussion about the Enlightenment as a period, a movement and a programme, outlining the way in which the various authors of this volume take the term 'enlightenment' as their point of reference. A brief overview is then given of the individual articles.

## **1. The Enlightenment as a period and a movement**

The Enlightenment, when referring to a period in history, more-or-less exactly coincides with the eighteenth century. It is generally taken to begin with the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the writings of Locke (1632-1704) and Bayle (1647-1706), and to end with the American Declaration of Independence (1776), the French Revolution (1789) or the fall of post-revolutionary France (1815), and the reaction of Romanticism. Precisely in connection with the philosophy of religion, which has its roots in the Enlightenment, I would point to a forerunner, Herbert of Cherbury (1582-1648), who is often called the father of Deism.<sup>1</sup> By the very nature of the matter, no terminus can be given for the Enlightenment as a programme. One could point to nineteenth-century thinkers such as Hegel and Marx, but the programme of the Enlightenment is picked up again and again in new forms, not only by twentieth-century sociologists such as Luhmann and Habermas, but also by Derrida.

The origins of enlightened thinking in terms of the philosophy of religion lie in the days of the religious disputes between Catholics and Protestants. Herbert of Cherbury was in Holland at the time of the Remonstrant conflicts. In France, too, where he was the English ambassador, he experienced religious conflict. His contribution, from the point of view of the philosophy of religion, to solving these religious conflicts was to develop the concept of natural religion. In this endeavour, he transformed natural *theology* into natural *religion*. In his *De Veritate* (1624), he outlined the five universal truths of natural religion: there is one God above all (supreme Deity) (1); this God must be worshipped (2); this occurs through piety and virtue, not through rites (3); by nature, human beings are repelled by their own

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<sup>1</sup> This judgement is under dispute; see D.A. Pailin, Herbert von Cherbury, *Theologische Realenzyklopädie Studienausgabe Teil I*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1986, XV, 65.

depravity (4); one should repent and atone for one's misdeeds (4); reward and punishment will take place in the afterlife (5).

In his *De Religione Laici* (1645), Herbert of Cherbury, in his own way, practises what Kant (1724-1804) would later describe as the programme of the Enlightenment, i.e. **“in Religionsdingen sich ihres eigenen Verstandes ohne Leitung eines Andern sicher und gut zu bedienen”**.<sup>2</sup> Herbert of Cherbury addresses the question of how a lay person can, through prayer and reason, reach an independent decision when it comes to choosing the right religion. How can a traveller in this world (viator) distinguish between truth and error? Since the revelation of positive religion is firmly anchored in history, it can only lay claim to probability, not to certainty. Instead of authoritative faith, belief in the authority of a church or tradition, Herbert of Cherbury posits that faith must be justified by reason. Religion as passed down through history is valid insofar as it is not at variance with reason. In his *De Veritate*, he demonstrates that natural religion is self-evident for human beings. For the philosophers of the eighteenth century, natural religion became the yardstick for revealed religion.

The Enlightenment began in England. In Locke and the English Deists, we already encounter Enlightenment themes, such as tolerance, independent thought and the right to form one's own judgement. In his *A Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713), the English Deist Anthony Collins (1676-1729) speaks up for the right to free thinking as independent thought. English Deists such as Collins and Thomas Woolston (1670-1733) disputed the historical validity of miracles and prophecies which the theologians of the Anglican church adduced as evidence for the Christian faith. Such thinkers had little regard for the rituals and dogmas of the church, as is evident from John Toland's (1670-1722) *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (1696). Natural religion was seen as the alternative to positive, historically developed, religion. Another English Deist, Matthew Tindal (1657-1733), defended the idea of an autonomous morality, an morality independent of biblical revelation. From England, this enlightened thinking spread to France and Germany.

In the present volume, the German thinkers of the Enlightenment, such as Lessing (1729-1881) and Kant (1724-1804), receive a great deal of attention, and for that reason I will outline their position within the eighteenth century as a whole. Especially when offset against the English

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<sup>2</sup> Kant, Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung, *Kants Werke*, Akademie-Textausgabe, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 1968-1977, VIII, 40 (*What is Enlightenment?*)

Deists such as Toland and Tindal, and the German Deist Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1786), Lessing and Kant's position with regard to history and positive religion emerges with greater clarity.

*The Deist context of Lessing's and Kant's philosophy of religion*<sup>3</sup>

Locke's statement that "*Reason must be our last guide in everything*"<sup>4</sup> can be taken as a motto for many 'enlightened thinkers'. This statement makes Locke a prime exponent of rationalism. Rationalism is here not understood epistemologically as the doctrine of innate concepts as opposed to empiricism, but rather as an attitude of mind founded on independent thought and judgement, free of sovereign, church or tradition. Many eighteenth-century enlightened thinkers believed that reason was *uniform*, and could thus serve as a universal yardstick. The way in which this principle was developed by the various thinkers differed considerably, as is shown by a comparison between Deists such as Tindal and Reimarus on the one hand, and (the later) Lessing and Kant, on the other hand. I shall demonstrate this using the example of their understanding of history.

Deism has been described as "on the basis of free investigation founded on thinking, elevating natural religion to the norm and rule for all positive religion".<sup>5</sup> The Deists believed that reason could solve all life's great questions. They viewed Christianity as 'not mysterious', because every human being should be able to understand religion. Thus Tindal writes: "To suppose it dark and mysterious in any Part, is to represent it as unworthy of having God for its Author".<sup>6</sup> In his historico-critical study, the *Apologie oder Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes* (Apology or defence for the rational worshippers of God) (1791), Reimarus attempts to demonstrate that Jesus preached a religion free of mystery.

The Deists were convinced of the uniformity and changelessness of reason. The natural order of things (the 'Reason and Nature of Things'<sup>7</sup>) is valid always and everywhere as the norm for all actions. Living in accordance

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<sup>3</sup> See for a comparison between the philosophy of religion of the Deists, Lessing and Kant: W. Stoker, *De christelijke godsdienst in de filosofie van de Verlichting, een vergelijkende studie over de geloofsverantwoording in het denken van Locke, de deïsten, Lessing en Kant*, Assen: Van Gorcum 1980.

<sup>4</sup> J. Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. A.C. Fraser, New York: Dover Publications 1959, 4.19.14.

<sup>5</sup> G.V. Lecher, *Geschichte des englischen Deismus*, (Tübingen 1841), Hildesheim: Ol's, 1965, 460, E. Troeltsch, *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionssoziologie*, (Tübingen 1925) Aalen: Scientia Verlag 1966, 846.

<sup>6</sup> M. Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature*, London 1730, ed.G. Gawlick, Stuttgart: Frommann 1967, 223.

with nature means obeying an unchanging and universal norm. New ethical or religious views are rated negatively as an alteration to that which nature teaches always and everywhere. Due to this belief in the uniformity of reason and nature, the Deists' perspective on history can be characterized as primitivism. By this I mean that the Deists held that the truths of natural religion were preserved most purely in the very earliest times. The title of Tindal's book expresses this in a nutshell: *Christianity as Old as the Creation, or the Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730). He posits that Christianity is as old as creation because he believes that each human being, through reason, has known natural religion (which Tindal identified with Christianity) from the beginning of time. For the Deists, not only does religion have its philosophical foundations in reason, but they also assume that religion is, by nature, proper to the human being. The 'Gospel a Republication of the Religion of Nature' purges religion of the sediments which have built up over the years, such as mysteries and ceremonies, and liberates us from "that Load of Superstition which has been mixed with it"<sup>8</sup>. What primitivism amounts to, thus, is that despite the changing times, there is nothing new under the sun.

Deists are often determinate for the image of the Enlightenment. Troeltsch and Gawlick call Deism *the philosophy of religion of the Enlightenment*.<sup>9</sup> But that is too one-sided. Lessing and Kant give new insights. They retain rationalism as an attitude of independent thought, and they too certainly view reason as uniform, but unlike Tindal and Reimarus, they do succeed in linking religion and history. The image of the Enlightenment would be even more colourful, I would point out in passing, were we to dwell for a moment on Hume, Rousseau or Herder. In her article, Richter correctly refers to the colourfulness of the Enlightenment. In line with the focus of the articles in this volume, however, I will here confine myself to Lessing and Kant.

### *Lessing's departure from the Deist philosophy of history*

It was only with difficulty that Lessing could extricate himself from the negative philosophy of history, primitivism. In 1743, he wrote his father a

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<sup>7</sup> Tindal, *Christianity als Old as the Creation*, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Tindal, *Christianity as old as the Creation*, 8.

<sup>9</sup> E. Troeltsch, *Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte und Religionsoziologie*, 429v., 845; G. Gawlick, 'Der Deismus als Grundzug der Religionsphilosophie der Aufklärung', in: *Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1786), ein "bekannter Unbekannter" der Aufklärung in Hamburg*, Göttingen: Van Den Hoeck & Ruprecht 1973, 36.

New-Year's greeting with the title: 'Glückwunschsrede, bey dem Eintritt des 1743sten Jahrs, von der Gleichheit eines mit dem andern' (Congratulatory address to mark the beginning of the 1743<sup>rd</sup> year, on the similarity of each with the other). As is shown even by the title, Lessing tends to believe that in fact there is no change, that all times are the same. A sense of historical development is entirely lacking here. Time is still viewed as one great present, in which there is no past or future.<sup>10</sup> Years later, Lessing seems to have freed himself from this perspective on history. In *Education of Humanity* (1781), he defends the Christian religion against the Deist Reimarus, who disputed that history was a suitable medium for divine revelation. Lessing gives an alternative view. He depicts history as a teleological process of development in which human beings are educated by virtue of revelation. Lessing depicts the pedagogical process from the end, looking back. Standing on a height, Lessing states that for the human being of today, religious truth is still 'a revealed truth', but one day religious truth will be open to insight by reason and obtainable without revelation.

The articles by *Grube* and *Geldhof* in this volume evaluate Lessing's concept of history differently. This has to do with the perspective from which each of them discusses his concept of history. We have seen that in confrontation with the Deist Reimarus (and in this sense Spinoza is also a Deist), Lessing makes an attempt to link history and revelation with one another, and has here moved away from his earlier Deist, ahistorical standpoint. By virtue of revelation, first in the Old, and later in the New Testament, man arrives at religious insight. Lessing anticipates a time when man will no longer have to rely on revelation, but will be able to attain this natural religion for himself. We can see the major difference from the Deist view of Tindal and Reimarus: insight into religious truth is not 'as old as creation' and eternal, but rather develops by virtue of history, which is understood as a process of divine pedagogy. *Grube*, in his explanation of Lessing's parable of the rings (1779), emphasizes above all the historical rootedness of religion. If one compares Lessing's understanding of history with that of Schelling, a different aspect of Lessing's approach to history comes to the fore. *Geldhof* shows that Lessing's understanding of history is more speculative than that of Schelling, since in his thinking the framework of interpretation strongly determines the historical details.

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<sup>10</sup> See for the philosophical background of the idea of history in Lessing: W. Stoker, *De christelijke godsdienst in de filosofie van de Verlichting*, 83f.

### *Kant and Deism*

Kant picks up his contemporaries' themes from the philosophy of religion, such as independent thought, natural religion, autonomous morality and tolerance, and reformulates them on a large scale in his critical philosophy. Since in his thinking reason is subject to self-criticism, and natural religion cannot withstand criticism, it is no longer a question of a religion derived from theoretical reason, but a religion derived from practical reason. In Kant, the concept of God becomes a transcendental idea of theoretical reason and a postulate of practical reason. Moral law, as a law derived from practical reason, replaces the Deist view of a natural law according to which nature is the norm for all activity. As was said above, Kant too retains the idea of uniformity which we encounter in the Deists, but gives it a different content. Independent thinking is reasonable thinking if it is thinking which has generally validity. He understands the thinking self as the transcendental subject which is common to all human beings. With the Deists, Kant shares the view that only that which is based on reason can be universal. For this reason he explains the Christian religion as a moral religion.<sup>11</sup> And the place of religion in history? Kant does not revert to the negative philosophy of history of Deists such as Tindal and Reimarus. Like Lessing, he believes that natural religion cannot come about without positive religion.

The importance of history, and thus of positive or revealed religion, for natural religion emerges clearly if one reads the third part of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793; henceforth *Religion*) from the point of view of Kant's philosophy of history. This philosophy depicts history as a development towards liberty and rationalism. Kant describes the formation of states in which liberty, and protection under the rule of law are possible. The subject of reciprocal relations between states also draws his attention in *Perpetual Peace* (1795), in which he advocates a cosmopolitical order. The emergence of the rule of law furthers Enlightenment<sup>12</sup>: the rights of each individual are protected and the climate is suitable for free thinking. The maxim of always thinking for oneself is the Enlightenment.<sup>13</sup> Constraint from the state, which would prevent us from bringing our thoughts into the open, is in conflict with this ideal.

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<sup>11</sup> Kant, *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, Werke VII, 67 (*The Strife of Faculties*); *Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft*, Werke VI, 155-157 (*Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Tr. T.Greene and H.H.Hudson: New York Harper Bros, 1960, IV, 1.1).

<sup>12</sup> Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784), Werke VIII, 27v (*Idea for a Universal History From a Cosmopolitan Point of View*).



In the third part of *Religion*, Kant poses the question of the conditions under which the realization of the highest good, as the ethical commonwealth of human beings on earth, is possible. In his striving for moral perfection, the individual will always be thwarted by the fact that he lives in society, surrounded by the malice, envy, and thirst for power of his fellows. The conversion of the individual is not enough, because he is frustrated in his search for the highest good by his contact with others. Yet, according to Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, it is the duty of each human being to strive for the highest good. How can these impediments be overcome? This is possible, in Kant's view, if each individual views himself as a part of humanity as a whole, and understands the highest good as the common good; the individual can only achieve moral perfection within a community of like-minded others. Humanity is under an obligation to itself to further the highest good as the common good.<sup>14</sup> Just as the 'judicial state of nature' must be replaced by the formation of a state based on the rule of law, the 'ethical state of nature' must be replaced by the setting up of a kingdom of virtue, a republic in which people obey moral laws.<sup>15</sup> But is this sufficient, if man is radically evil, as Kant believes?

In her article in this volume, *Schaafsma* points to Kant's theme of radical evil. Radical evil is the reason why Kant views the establishment of an ethical commonwealth as a superhuman endeavour, in which human beings must rely on God. Human beings are simply not up to the task. How can an ethical commonwealth of this kind ever come about? How can one expect something pure out of impure beings, or "something perfectly straight ...out of such crooked wood"?<sup>16</sup> Here the pale God as a postulate of practical reason acquires more colour. Working to achieve an ethical commonwealth is meaningless without belief in God as the founder and inspiration behind it. The obligation to work towards an ethical commonwealth of mankind presupposes belief in God. "To found a moral people of God is therefore a task whose consummation can be worked for not from men but only from God himself".<sup>17</sup>

Institutional belief, the Church, is indispensable for the introduction of moral religion. Kant expects that by virtue of the emerging Enlightenment,

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<sup>13</sup> Kant, *Was heisst: Sich im Denken orientieren?* (1786), Werke VIII, 146 footnote. (*What is Orientation in Thinking?*)

<sup>14</sup> *Die Religion*, Werke VI, 6,97f. (*Religion* 89).

<sup>15</sup> Werke VI, 94v. (*Religion* 87).

<sup>16</sup> Werke VI, 100 (*Religion* 92).

<sup>17</sup> Werke, VI, 100 (*Religion* 92).

the church, which is forced to impose obligations on people, will be completely remodelled in his day.<sup>18</sup> The aim is that everyone will obey moral law, which is the law of God and will unite all people in an ethical commonwealth.

## 2. Heirs of the Enlightenment?

The Enlightenment as a movement is colourful, sometimes opposed to religion altogether, sometimes merely critical of it. If one poses the question of whether we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, wish to be heirs of the Enlightenment, then one should remember that Enlightenment is not a monolithic term. Generally this question receives a variety of answers, and this also applies to the authors of this volume. The fact is that the Western world was changed by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Political and social relations changed. The French Revolution was followed, in countries such as France, Belgium and the Netherlands, by the separation of Church and State. From a political point of view, the Enlightenment was fruitful for the rise of democracy and human rights. In Western Europe, and other countries to which the Enlightenment emanated, such as the United States and Canada, there is religious freedom and free speech. In the political situation of today, Habermas and Derrida draw on the programme of the Enlightenment. They respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 with a plea for a new cosmopolitical order. They point to the Enlightenment ideals of world citizenship and cosmopolitical law as formulated in Kant's *Perpetual Peace*. Their aim is a universal community in which all members have the right to "offer themselves to a community on the basis of the right of common possession of the surface of the earth".<sup>19</sup>

I will point to various answers to the question of whether we wish to be the heirs of the Enlightenment.

### *Critical public sphere and religion*

Kant pleaded for the freedom of the theologian, as a scholar, to make public use of reason: "**der öffentliche Gebrauch seiner Vernunft muss jederzeit frei sein, und der allein kann Aufklärung unter Menschen zu Stande**

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<sup>18</sup> Werke VI, 123 footnote.

<sup>19</sup> G. Burradori, *Philosophy in a time of terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 2003, Preface.

**bringen**"<sup>20</sup> Public freedom stimulates the freedom of individuals since, according to Kant, every individual 'by nature' makes use of the opportunity to give his own judgement as soon as external circumstances allow.<sup>21</sup> Enlightened philosophers in the eighteenth century resisted the *traditional public sphere* of the sovereign and the church with its constraints and authoritarian precepts. Enlightened members of civil society, first in England, and from the middle of the century in France and subsequently also in Germany, began to feel the need to express their opinion freely in matters of general interest such as morality and religion. They demanded a *critical public sphere*. Freedom of conscience and opinion should no longer need to be restricted to the private sphere, but should also be possible in public. In our own day, it is above all Habermas who has advocated a critical and historical reconstruction of the development of the public sphere in modern western democracies<sup>22</sup>.

Herbert of Cherbury and the enlightened philosophers of the eighteenth century sought the solution for the peaceful coexistence of the different confessions in the recognition of a common basis, natural religion. This was only a partial solution, since belief generally remains *within* differing faith communities which are based on sacred writings and tradition. For this reason, enlightened philosophers also came up with the requirement for *tolerance* if different religious groups are to live together side by side. In this connection, *Grube* points to the importance of Lessing's parable of the rings, in which he shows that the positive religions, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, have only historical grounds for their claim to truth. This effectively wipes out the justification for belief, which was so characteristic for the Enlightenment itself: reason, with its natural or rational religion, is the very foundation of religion and the touchstone for evaluating religious belief. Only later developments in epistemology make possible the type of justification of faith which Grube wishes to highlight in the parable of the rings, due to the classical foundational thought of enlightened thinkers being replaced by a practice-oriented rationality.<sup>23</sup> A justification of belief of this kind brings with it a willingness for inter-religious dialogue which only really

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung, *Werke*, VIII, 37.

<sup>21</sup> Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung, *Werke* VIII, 41.

<sup>22</sup> J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of the Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989; *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> Zie als voorbeeld hiervan Wessel Stoker, *Is Faith Rational? A Hermeneutical-Phenomenological Accounting for Faith*, Peeters: Louvain 2006.

gained momentum after the development of ecumenism in the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>

*Criticism: continuing the project of the Enlightenment?*

Kant calls his time an age of criticism.<sup>25</sup> The Enlightenment knows criticism in many forms. The legacy of eighteenth-century Deists, Anglican theologians (the Latitudinarians), and German Neologists, *historical criticism* has become part of academic theology today.

In the Enlightenment, philosophy was frequently identified with criticism.<sup>26</sup> The criticism of positive religion, with its ceremonies and rituals, at the hands of the proponents of *moral religion* was mentioned above. In their striving for a formal religion, Lessing and Kant did wish to retain something of positive religion. This project of the Enlightenment, the translation of religious notions into secular terms, or the ideal of a formal religion, is continued by Habermas and Derrida, as *Kuipers* and *De Meyere* show.

Hume, in his *The Natural History of Religion* (1757), draws a distinction between the foundation of natural religion in reason, on the one hand, and investigation into the causes of religious belief, on the other.<sup>27</sup> In this way he criticizes Deists such as Tindal and Reimarus, for whom religion is simultaneously both reasonable, and proper to human nature. For after all, they believed that religion was as old as mankind. Hume disputes the notion that religion is characteristic of human nature, and explains religion as the result of passions present in human beings. Due to fear, for example, human beings affirm the existence of supernatural beings. Thus Hume would explain not only positive religion, but also natural religion, as a result of the force which passions exert on human beings. This is an example of a reductionist explanation of religion. The criticism is *reductionist*, since explaining religion in terms of human passions is in conflict with religion's own self-image. In the later disciplines of the psychology and sociology of religion, reductionism, in the context of the theory of religion, has been the subject of a great deal of discussion. In the current volume, *Beeckman* and

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<sup>24</sup> H.M. Vroom, *A Spectrum of World Views*, Amsterdam New York: Rodopi 2006.

<sup>25</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1781), *Werke* 4, 9 footnote.

<sup>26</sup> P. Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation, The Rise of Modern Paganism*, New York: Vintage Books 1968, ch.3.

<sup>27</sup> D.Hume, *The Natural History of Religion*, ed.H.E. Root, London: Adam & Charles Black 1956, 21. Zie W. van Herck, De taak van de godsdienstfilosofie, *Bijdragen*, Tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie, 59 (1998) 441-443.

*Thomas* examine reductionism in the psychology and the sociology of religion.

According to Kant, the maxim of always thinking for oneself is Enlightenment. Independent thought is only possible if one is aware of the limitations of reason. In the English Deists and Reimarus, a *self-criticism of reason* is lacking. In their epistemology, Locke, Hume and Kant furnish such self-criticism, each in their own way. For the philosophy of religion, in Kant's view, self-criticism entails: "I had to remove *knowledge*, in order to make room for *belief*".<sup>28</sup> This raises the matter of whether it is possible to imagine belief without cognition. *Depoortere* discusses these problems in this volume, taking the example of the Czech philosopher Zizek.

#### *Alternatives for the Enlightenment, or beyond the Enlightenment*

Heirs of the Enlightenment? Some of the articles in the volume show that the project of the Enlightenment is still in progress. Others give alternatives for the Enlightenment. In the eighteenth century there was already a movement which came to be known as the Counter-Enlightenment. In his article, *Larjo* discusses Jacobi as an example of this school of thought. Authors such as *Koistinen* and *Verbin* give their own alternatives for aspects of enlightened thought, whilst *De Courten*, *Pratt* and *A. Vroom* point to alternatives from beyond Western Europe: Eastern Orthodox and Buddhist thinking.

The Enlightenment was strong in its programme of specific themes such as tolerance, the plea for a critical public sphere and independent thought as an expression of maturity. Its weaknesses lay, inter alia, in its vision of the human subject and its doctrine of God. Kant's understanding of the phenomenon was also the subject of discussion in twentieth-century phenomenology. The current volume presents a new approach relating to the notion of the human being, the doctrine of God and the description of the phenomenon. It goes without saying that this is an approach which is new in comparison with Enlightenment philosophy. Naturally these new approaches are always tied in with later developments in theology and philosophy. A new approach to the concept of rationality is lacking in this volume. We can only conclude, with *Richter*, that ultimately the Enlightenment produced a fragile concept of reason. Postmodernism opposes enlightened foundational thinking. C.O. Schragg and J.J. Van Huyssteen seek a new concept of

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<sup>28</sup> Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (1787), *Werke* III, 19.

reason, beyond both foundational thinking itself and postmodern anti-foundational thinking.<sup>29</sup>

Cartesian philosophy understands the human being ontologically as a spiritual substance. In his reflection on humanity, the empiricist Locke struggles with the concept of substance. Locke still retains the concept of substance in his notion of the human being, although it is at variance with his empiricism. Hume is more radical and rejects it. He understands the human being as a bundle of perceptions, which gives rise to the problem of how one should imagine human identity. Kant keeps to the transcendental subject which is common to all human beings. *Welten* shows, in the context of phenomenology, how one should imagine the interiority of the human being, whilst *Jeanrond* and *Anderson* present fresh approaches to the human subject using the phenomenon of love.

The theologians and philosophers of the eighteenth century are not very innovative where the doctrine of God is concerned. Toland, Tindal and Reimarus operate with different ontologies, but concur in their understanding of God. They view God as the ideal type of the human being. God's characteristics are idealized versions of human characteristics. Tindal writes, for example: "we then, ...*live the life of God*; that is, we in our Place and Station, live after the same Manner, and by the same Rules as he does in his".<sup>30</sup> Kant rejects this Deist anthropomorphic discourse of God, which uncritically borrows predicates from human nature, and pleads instead for a symbolic discourse of God. We can give meaning to the concept of God, for example, by taking the relationship between a father and his children as a symbol of God's relationship with mankind. This is an analogy which indicates the similarities between two relationships (analogia proportionalitatis).<sup>31</sup> Later linguistic analysis and research into metaphor have made new progress for the discourse of God. Kant preserved the classical theistic discourse of God as almighty, all-knowing and all-good. In the twentieth century, Tillich and others corrected this idea of God. *Kearney* presents a model for a post-onto-theological idea of God, as an alternative both to classical theism and postmodern, negative theologies. *Boeve* furnishes interesting comment on this model. *Schrijvers* shows the

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<sup>29</sup> C.O. Schrag, *The Resources of Rationality; a Response to the Postmodern Challenge*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1992, J. W. Van Huyssteen, *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science*, Grand Rapids & Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans 1999. W. Stoker, *Is Faith Rational?* ch. 6.2.

<sup>30</sup> Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, 24.

completely new approach of Marion, in the latter's description of the phenomenon as 'saturated'. In this, Marion wishes to act as a corrective not only to Kant's description of the phenomenon, but also to that of Husserl and Heidegger.

### **3. Scope and structure of the current volume**

*Part one* is devoted to *a few highlights from the Enlightenment as a historical period and movement*. Richter provides an overview of the Enlightenment as a period and movement. She emphasizes the diversity of the Enlightenment and presents four possible models for sub-dividing the period. She pays separate attention to Lessing and Kant. Grube shows that in his parable of the rings, Lessing gives a justification for faith which no longer claims to be universal. Judaism, Christianity and Islam give an internal justification of faith because they have only historical documents to legitimize themselves. For tolerance, then, one need not only point to the Deist natural religion and modern versions of this in Hick and Cantwell Smith. The religions which have grown up historically can also develop an attitude of tolerance, as Lessing demonstrates.

Geldhof compares Lessing's view of history with Schelling's view of the ancient history of Judaism. He considers Schelling's 'historical philosophy' more historical in approach than Lessing, who presents a philosophy of history which is divorced from the facts. Schaafsma discusses Jaspers' interpretation of Kant's doctrine of radical evil. Unlike Jaspers, Schaafsma believes that Kant presents a paradox, in that the individual is held responsible for evil, whereas at the same time evil is seen as a given of human nature. Larjo describes Jacobi as an example of the Counter-Enlightenment. Jacobi dismisses Spinoza's doctrine of freedom as fatalism which leads to nihilism. He views faith as part of knowledge, in this showing similarities with the Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid. Jacobi is an anti-foundational thinker, but should not, in Larjo's view, be viewed as a postmodernist *avant la lettre*.

*Part two* concerns the *continuation of the project of the Enlightenment*. Beeckman discusses Freud's theory of religion. Freud's *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) stands in the tradition of Enlightenment criticism and is

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<sup>31</sup> Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, Werke V, par. 59 (*Critique of Judgement*).

strongly reductionist. Natural science is here the model for what knowledge is. Freud's later book *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) has a different tone due to its more tempered reductionism, since science and religion are now not so sharply contrasted with one another. Truth and meaning are given a place in the interpretation of religion. Freud points to the importance of religion for cultural evolution.

*Thomas* describes Durkheim, Weber and Luhmann's sociology of religion as an Enlightenment project. They describe religion as a sociological phenomenon from a superior, privileged standpoint which is in conflict with religion's self-image. To what extent can religion be translated into other terms? *Thomas* discusses the dilemma between a reductionist and non-reductionist description of religion (Bellah and Eliade), and seeks a solution in an 'operative realism' which recognizes a limited possibility for the translation of religion. Any theoretical perspective is characterized by systematic uncertainty.

*Kuipers* and *De Meyere* show that the interpretation of religion of the enlightened philosophers of religion finds its successors in Habermas and Derrida. Lessing and Kant, for example, translated insights from Christian belief into general philosophical language, in this way arriving at a general concept of religion. *Kuipers* shows that Habermas does something similar. Habermas translates Jewish and Christian insights, such as the biblical notions of the covenant, forgiveness and atonement, into secular language. Just as Kant viewed Enlightenment as a process which was not yet complete, according to Habermas this is also true of secularization in our own day. By virtue of translating such religious insights into secular terms, reason becomes an 'inclusive, solidarity-building force'. *De Meyere* examines to what extent Derrida reiterates Kant's concept of religion. Like Kant, Derrida pleads for a formal religion, but he is more radical, in that he wishes to sever religion from its Jewish and Christian background. However, another reading of Derrida is also possible, in which religion does remain anchored in history. These two readings of Derrida are revealed to be two sides of the one coin. Both readings are determined by the predominance of the logos (reason/writing). *De Meyere* himself seeks a close association between religion and history.

*Depoortere* shows how the philosopher S.Zizek, from Prague, links in with Kant's obliteration of knowledge to make way for belief. The status of faith (as trust) and its content (belief) in a so-called post-Enlightenment age is examined in the example of Zizek. Can we speak of 'faith as trust without



its content, belief? Zizek suggests the hypothesis of a primordial choice, which explains adherence to a certain faith tradition. The believer discovers that he has already always chosen to believe. This is the only way, according to Depoortere, to retain the critical element of the Enlightenment and to avoid both postmodern relativism and fundamentalism.

*Part three gives alternatives for the Enlightenment.* The first section concerns alternatives from Western theology and philosophy, and the second section alternatives from Russian Orthodox thought and Buddhism.

*Koistinen* raises the debate about realism in reaction to the universality of enlightened reason, and pleads for 'meaning finitism'. The meaning of words is learned in the light of a finite number of examples which are different for different people. The alternative to an a-historical reality in matters of religion, or to a Deist understanding of meaning, is not religion as a social construct (Durkheim), but a 'minimal theological realism', in which theological terms and knowledge are context-dependent. *Verbin* points to the use of imagination in Bible stories. Faith should not be understood as a species of a historical, scientific, or metaphysical belief. She wishes to avoid not only Lessing's problem of religion and history, but also the discussion about proofs of God's existence, in which faith is understood as a sort of belief. *Verbin* pleads for faith as participation in a biblical world of fiction, by means of imagining the various events, instead of viewing the stories in the Bible as history.

*De Courten* and *Pratt* introduce Russian alternatives to enlightened thought, and *A. Vroom* looks at an alternative from the Buddhist tradition. *De Courten* discusses Slovyov's ambition to make religion the core of life. His thinking certainly embraces enlightened themes such as religious freedom, progress and criticism of dogma. However, the fundamental principle behind his thinking ultimately turns out not to be Enlightenment in the secular sense, but rather in the religious sense of divine wisdom (sophia). *Pratt*, in his article, discusses the alternative to enlightened reason put forward by the Russian theologian Florensky, who was executed in 1937 by the Communist authorities. As an alternative to the enlightened concept of reason, Florensky proffers his vision of absolute knowledge understood as a series of steps, perspectives and movements which manifest themselves simultaneously. This can only be expressed in spatial metaphors. *A. Vroom* shows how Hisimatsu Shin'ichi, a philosopher and practitioner of Zen, criticizes the Western understanding of rationality because it stands in the

way of an open attitude towards reality. Living rationally causes suffering because our thoughts and theories prevent us from seeing things as they really are and as we ourselves are. What is striking is that Hisimatsu Shin'ichi does nevertheless speak strongly in favour of independent thought, *the* theme of the Enlightenment. Is this a contradiction?

*Part four* represents a new departure for the philosophy of religion, compared with the philosophy of the Enlightenment, in its thinking about human beings, God, and the description of phenomena. *Welten* shows that the French phenomenologist Michel Henry puts forward a view of the human subject which does justice to the interiority of the human being, the spiritual space in which he or she seeks God. Henry builds on Kandinsky's insights regarding colours and forms which do not merely refer to the exterior world, but also manifest something of that which is invisible, the immediate continuance of life. In this way, in his phenomenology of the human subject, Henry explains human interiority *as* interiority, and not as the result of relations with the external world.

*Anderson* searches for the correct notion of the self in love relationships. This cannot be a neutral self, but equally not a self-sacrificing self. In love, one must always postulate a loving self. Selflessness in love (the absence of self-seeking) is thus not a matter of liberation from oneself, but rather of being 'oneself as an other' (Ricoeur). *Anderson* attempts to develop a correct notion of self by drawing on Weil and Murdoch. *Jeanrond*, in his Christian theology of love, also rejects self-less love. The emphasis in St John's Gospel on love for one's own group should be supplemented by St Paul's understanding of love as respecting the otherness of the other with patience and affection, and St Luke's stress on a love which encompasses all human beings, regardless of status or race. Further, *Jeanrond* posits that love should constitute the new framework for the discourse of the human self, rather than the self as the framework for the discourse of love. Even more than Brümmer and Marion, *Jeanrond* wishes to emphasize the importance of the body. The experience of true love is simultaneously the starting point for religious experience. The true experience of love has the potential to open the self through and to the otherness of the other, and the otherness of the self. For after all, does not the experience of otherness contain the possibility of being confronted with God's radical otherness?

*Schrijvers* analyses the concept of the saturated phenomenon in the writings of Marion. In this way, the miracle is reintroduced into philosophy,

albeit understood differently from in discussions at the time of the Enlightenment. Schrijvers examines whether Marion's phenomenology does perhaps remain indebted to metaphysics.

In his 'poetics of the possible God', *Kearney* posits a 'God who may be' as an alternative to the classical theistic, almighty God 'who is'. He pleads for the priority of the possible above the real. The Kingdom of God is not about domination and omnipotence, but about small things, as is demonstrated by Jesus' parable of the mustard seed. Thus an eschatological God of promise and of powerlessness is depicted, and this emphasizes human responsibility for the realization of the Kingdom of God. The 'wager' that God should be experienced as a possibility to come is backed up with passages from Scripture, examples from the Western philosophical tradition, and quotations from poets such as Musil and Rilke. *Boeve* responds with a commentary on Kearney's model of a post-onto-theological God. He compares Kearney's contribution with those of postmodern philosophers such as Derrida and Caputo, especially where Derrida points to the structure of the Messianic. Kearney opts for a hermeneutic approach to religion, and takes the analysis of traditional texts as his starting point. Boeve agrees with this hermeneutics of particularity, highlighting the particular historical event of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ.

Prof. dr. Wessel Stoker teaches philosophy of religion and aesthetics at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam

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